
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 6655

AN ACT CONCERNING CAMPUS SAFETY AND SECURITY.

SUMMARY:

This bill requires public and independent institutions of higher education to develop security protocol plans, form campus threat assessment teams, and undergo safety audits. It also changes several aspects of the law regarding special police forces, including (1) civil service testing for UConn and state university police officers, (2) UConn and state university hiring authority, and (3) officer certification.

The bill (1) commissions a study of possible special police forces on regional community technical college (RCTC) campuses, and (2) requires a coordinated security plan between the RCTC and Connecticut State University Systems.

The bill also appropriates \$200,000 to the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) for campus safety and security audits of every state institution of higher education.

It also makes a technical change, renaming an “independent college or university” as an “independent institution of higher education.” The bill fails to make conforming changes in other statutes where the term appears.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

SECURITY PROTOCOL PLANS

The bill requires UConn and all its campuses, all state colleges in the Connecticut State University System (CSUS), all regional community-technical colleges, and all Connecticut independent institutions of higher education to do the following:

1. by October 1, 2013, give an up-to-date security protocol plan to DESPP, which by law must outline how faculty and staff should identify and respond to students at risk for harm to self or others; and
2. by July 1, 2015, and every two years afterward, review and revise, as necessary, its security protocol plan with chiefs of police or campus security and submit revisions to DESPP by August 1 of the affected year.

The law required the institutions to submit an earlier version of the plan to the former Department of Higher Education by January 1, 2009.

THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAMS

The bill requires all of the above institutions to establish trained threat assessment teams on each campus by January 1, 2014. The institution president must choose team membership in consultation with the campus chief of police or head of security. Membership must include at least one member each from its special police force or campus security personnel, administration, faculty, and senior and mid-level staff. The chief of police or head of security for each campus must ensure that each member (1) is capable of executing the security protocol plan, and (2) receives training in identifying at-risk people and safety threats.

CAMPUS SAFETY AND SECURITY AUDITS

The bill requires DESPP, by December 1, 2014, to perform or require an audit of the following campuses to determine their safety and security characteristics: UConn and all its campuses, all state colleges in CSUS, all regional community-technical colleges, and the Board for State Academic Awards (which does not have a physical campus).

The bill requires DESPP to base any recommendations for campus security upgrades on the audit's findings and align them with the campus's security protocol plan. DESPP must do this in consultation with UConn's Board of Trustees and Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR). DESPP must report the audit results to the Higher

Education and Employment Advancement Committee by January 1, 2015.

SPECIAL POLICE FORCES

Civil Service Testing

By law, UConn and all its campuses, as well as the four colleges in CSUS, are authorized to establish their own police forces, whose officers can be armed and have the authority to make arrests. These officers are state employees. The bill excludes these positions from certain aspects of the State Personnel Act that address civil service qualifying exams.

UConn and CSUS Hiring Authority

The bill gives the respective governing bodies for UConn and the CSUS the authority to determine:

1. the preliminary requirements, including educational qualifications, for members of the special police forces for UConn and the state colleges, respectively, and
2. the timeline for filling vacancies on the respective police forces, including when an exam for a vacant position will be offered and how soon after the exam an appointment to a vacant position can be made.

If an exam is unnecessary due to a sufficient candidate list the administrative services commissioner provides under state civil service law, then the governing body of UConn or CSUS must make an appointment from that candidate list.

Certification Requirements for Armed Higher Education Security

The bill requires all armed campus security personnel to be certified by the Police Officer Standards and Training (POST) Council (see BACKGROUND). Current law requires this for special police force officers on campuses.

REGIONAL TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE PROVISIONS

Special Police Force Efficacy Study

The bill requires the BOR, in consultation with DESPP, to evaluate whether the establishment of a special police force for each RCTC would be effective. By January 1, 2014, the BOR president must deliver the results to the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee.

Coordinated Security Plan

The bill also requires BOR to develop a coordinated security plan for CSUS and the regional community-technical college system. By January 1, 2014, the BOR president must report on the plan to the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee.

BACKGROUND

POST Authority and Regulations

POST establishes minimum qualifications for municipal police officers and enforces professional standards for certifying and decertifying them. Its entry level requirements for police officers include personal interviews, fingerprint examinations, background investigations, psychological examinations, criminal history record checks, controlled substance screens, and physical fitness and medical tests (Conn. Agencies Reg. § 7-294e-16).

Related Act

PA 13-3 contains language identical to this bill, but does not contain the appropriation to DESPP for campus audits.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 18 Nay 1 (03/26/2013)